

General Fishing Information

Look for our fishing trailers at popular waters near you! See the trailer schedule at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov>

Do You Need to Know Where to Take the Family Fishing?

In response to anglers requesting more family-oriented fishing opportunities and simplified rules, IDFG has identified waters that have basic rules and bag limits and provide a high likelihood that inexperienced anglers will catch a fish.

Each region has a Family Fishing Water Guide that you can find at our website or any of our Regional Offices. These pamphlets give you directions to local “Family Fishing Waters,” list the types of fish you could catch, access locations, and provide tips on fishing techniques to make your outing successful.

Below are several terms, rules, and definitions used in this booklet. Please consult the Idaho Administrative Procedures Act webpage or Title 36 of the Idaho Code for more detail: (<http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/rules/idapa13/13index.htm>)

Methods of Fishing and Equipment

Archery and Spear Fishing: Fishing with a bow and arrow, crossbow, spear or mechanical device, excluding firearms. This type of fishing is permitted only in the taking of bullfrogs and unprotected nongame fish and only in those waters during the season set for the taking of game fish.

Artificial Fly: Any fly made entirely of rubber, wood, metal, glass, feather, fiber, or plastic by the method known as fly tying.

Artificial Lure: Any device made entirely of rubber, wood, metal, glass, feather, fiber, or plastic with hook or hooks attached. Bait of any kind may not be used with artificial lures when fishing artificial flies and lures-only waters.

Attendance of Fishing Gear: You must attend to your fishing gear while fishing. This means being able to watch your rod at all times and be able to react to a potential strike.

Bait: Organic substances, other than rubber, wood feather, fiber, or plastic, attached to a hook to attract fish. Bait includes insects, insect larvae, worms, dead fish, fish parts, any other animal or vegetable matter, or scented synthetic materials.

Note: Use of live fish, leeches, frogs, salamanders, waterdogs or shrimp as bait is prohibited in Idaho, except that live crayfish may be used if caught on the body of water being fished.

Bait Fishing: Fishing with any organic substance defined as “bait.”

Barbless Hook: A fish hook without barbs or on which barbs have been bent completely closed (Point of barbed area touches the body of the hook).

Catch-and-Release Fishing: Effort, by permitted methods, to catch or attempt to catch a fish or species of fish is legal, with the restriction that any fish or species of fish so caught must be released immediately, unharmed back to the water. Catch-and-release fishing is only allowed when a fishing season is open for that particular fish species. **No released fish can be marked by any means including tags, fin clips, or injuring with an intent to leave a scar.** **Note:** Species of fish not specifically listed as catch-and-release may be harvested under their appropriate limits.

Chumming: The use of any substance not attached to a hook that is intended to attract fish. It is illegal to chum while fishing in Idaho.

Closed to Fishing: No fishing of any type is allowed in the water body.

Contest/Tournament Fishing: An event where the total prize value is greater than \$1,000; or the individual entry fee is greater than \$25; or there is a live fish weigh-in which is based on the capture of an individual fish, or the size or number of fish captured. Any person, organization, club, business, partnership, corporation or other entity that sponsors a fishing contest must first obtain a fishing contest permit from IDFG. Generally speaking, tournaments will not be approved for fishing on native fish species. An application can be obtained at your local IDFG Regional Office. Allow a minimum of 30 days for processing.

Disturbing Traps or Fishing Gear Belonging to Others: It is illegal to destroy, disturb, or remove any traps belonging to others.

Electric Motor Only: When fishing waters listed “electric motors only,” gas (internal combustion) motors may be attached to the boat; but use of the gas motor is prohibited

Fishing: Any effort made to take, kill, injure, capture, or catch any fish, crayfish, or bullfrog. All fishing in Idaho requires a valid fishing license except fishing in a private pond where the owner has a valid Private Pond Permit from IDFG.

Fishing Gear: It is illegal to fish in any waters of Idaho with more than one handline or pole with a line attached; or with two poles or lines without a two-pole permit; or with more than five poles or lines while ice fishing; or by archery, spearfishing, snagging, hands, and netting except as permitted. Not more than five hooks may be attached per line. The line or lines must be attended by the person fishing.

Fishing License: You must have in your possession a valid fishing license to fish in Idaho. You must produce your license or fish upon request of an agent of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Fishing Shelter: Any enclosure or shelter used for fishing. If left unattended overnight on the ice of any water statewide, it shall have the owners' name, telephone number, and current address legibly marked on two opposing sides of the enclosure or shelter.

Fly-Fishing: Fishing with a fly rod, fly reel, fly line, and artificial flies.

Float Tube: A floating device which suspends a single occupant, from the seat down, in the water, and is not propelled by oars, paddles or motor.

Gaff Hook: A pointed device designed to pierce a fish for the purpose of reducing the fish to possession. It is illegal to land fish of any species with a gaff hook except through a hole cut or broken in the ice in waters which have no length restrictions or harvest closures for that species **or when landing non-game fish taken with archery equipment.**

Hands, Use of for Fishing: The only fish you can legally catch and harvest using your hands are crayfish and bullfrogs. You must use fishing gear to harvest all other fish species.

Hook: A bent wire device, for the catching of fish, to which one, two, or three points may be attached to a single shank. Up to five (5) hooks per line may be used, except where specifically prohibited. When fishing for salmon or steelhead, the gap between the point and shank cannot be greater than 5/8 inch. A **single-pointed hook** has one shank and one point.

Ice Fishing: Fishing through an opening, broken or cut, through the ice. You may fish with a maximum of five (5) lines per angler. The opening in the ice may not exceed 10 inches in diameter except on Bear Lake while fishing for cisco. **Note:** two-pole permits do not entitle the angler to exceed the five pole limit for ice fishing.

Illegal Fishing Methods: No chemicals, poisons, electric current, or explosives may be used to attempt catching or destroying fish.

Maggot: An unhatched fly larva.

Molesting Fish: It is illegal to molest any fish by shooting at it with a firearm or pellet gun, striking at it with a club, hands, rocks, or other objects, building obstructions for catching fish, or chasing fish up or downstream in any manner.

Motor: Includes electric and internal combustion motors.

No Motor: Fishing from a water craft with a motor attached is prohibited.

Sliding Sinker: A method of attaching a sinker to a device that slides freely on the main line. The line used to attach the sinker to the sliding device must be of lower breaking strength than the main line.

Snag Fishing: Taking or attempting to take a fish by use of a hook or lure in any manner or method other than enticing or attracting a fish to strike with, and become hooked in, its mouth or jaw. Game fish which are hooked other than in the mouth or jaw must be released immediately. Snag fishing is illegal except where allowed by special rule.

Trapping or Seining Minnows and Crayfish: Nongame fish (minnows), yellow perch, and crayfish may be taken only in waters open to fishing; provided the seine or net does not exceed ten (10) feet in length or width, and nets and seines must have three-eighths (3/8) inch square or smaller mesh; and the minnow or crayfish trap does not exceed two (2) feet in length, width or height. If the trap is of irregular dimension, but its volume does not exceed the volume of an eight (8) cubic foot trap, it is also legal to use. Nets and seines may not be left unattended. Traps must be checked at least every forty-eight (48) hours. All traps must have a tag attached bearing the owner's name and address.

All game fish (except yellow perch) and protected nongame fish incidentally taken while trapping or seining must be immediately released alive. All fish so taken must immediately be killed except where stated otherwise. Crayfish may be kept alive to be used as bait only on the water where captured. Nongame fish and crayfish may only be taken during the season set for the taking of game fish in those waters.

Only five (5) crayfish traps can be fished with a valid fishing license. If more than five traps are used at one time, you must obtain a Commercial Fishing License and trap tags.

It is illegal to destroy, disturb, or remove any traps belonging to others.

Two-Pole Permit: A person who has a valid resident or nonresident fishing license may purchase a two-pole permit. This permit authorizes the license holder to use two poles or rods at the same time on waters and during seasons specified by Commission Rule. Valid for all open water and salmon and steelhead fishing.

Fish Terms and Limits

Bag Limit: The maximum number of fish that may be legally harvested by any one person in one day. The term "bag limit" shall be construed to be an individual, independent effort and shall not be interpreted in any manner as to allow one individual to take more fish than their "bag limit" toward filling the "bag limit" of another. The bag and possession limits are equal, except where listed and for salmon and steelhead.

It is illegal to fish in waters having special bag or species limits while in possession of fish in excess of those limits.

Clipped Adipose Fin: See diagram page 40. The adipose fin must be missing or nearly missing with a healed scar where the adipose fin is supposed to be located.

Game Fish: Brook, brown, bull, cutthroat, golden, lake (Mackinaw), rainbow (including steelhead), splake and Sunapee trout; trout hybrids; Chinook, coho, Atlantic, and kokanee (blueback) salmon; grayling; whitefish; cisco; crappie; perch; bass; catfish; bullhead; sunfish; sturgeon; northern pike; tiger muskie; walleye and sauger; and burbot (Ling). Bullfrogs and crayfish are also defined as game fish.

General Rules: The seasons, gear, and bag limits adopted for the region where you are fishing.

Harvest: Reduce a fish to possession.

Hybrid Fish: The offspring of two different species or subspecies of fish.

Limit is 0: Catch-and-release fishing is allowed but the fish species listed in the rule must be released after landing and may not be reduced to possession.

Nongame Fish: Any fish not specifically defined as a “game fish.” Protected nongame fish are Shoshone, Wood River, and Bear Lake sculpin, sand roller, northern leatherside chub and Pacific lamprey.

Possession Limit: Maximum number of fish that may be legally in possession of any person. Possession limit shall apply to fish while in the field or being transported to the final place of consumption or storage. All fish that are hooked, landed, and not immediately released shall be counted in the possession limit of the person hooking the fish. The bag and possession limits are equal, except where listed and for salmon and steelhead.

Salmon, Chinook: Anadromous (ocean run) salmon of the species *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha* in the Snake River drainage below Hells Canyon Dam, the Salmon River drainage, and the Clearwater drainage (excluding lakes and the North Fork of the Clearwater River above Dworshak Dam), and the Boise River, when stocked.

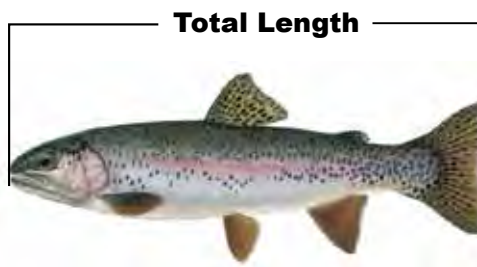
Season Limit: The maximum number of fish that may be legally taken in any declared season.

Special Rule Waters: Any water with a gear, season, or bag limit rule that is different from the general rule.

Steelhead: Rainbow trout longer than 20 inches in length in the Snake River drainage below Hells Canyon Dam, the Salmon River drainage (excluding lakes and the Lemhi and Pahsimeroi rivers), and the Clearwater river drainage (excluding that portion above Dworshak Dam, and lakes). Rainbow trout longer than 20 inches in length with a clipped adipose fin (as evidenced by a healed scar) are defined as steelhead in the

S Snake River from Hells Canyon Dam upstream to Oxbow Dam, and in the Boise River from its mouth upstream to Barber Dam.

Total Fish Length: The length as measured from the tip of the snout to the end of the tail.



Boundary and Water Definitions

Confluence of a River or Stream: The point where two rivers or streams come together.

Diversion: A man-made structure designed to change the direction of flowing water in a stream.

Diversion Pond: A man-made pond holding water taken from a stream or reservoir. The diversion pond may be connected to the stream or reservoir by an open ditch or pipe.

Drainage: All water flowing into a common river or stream system, either above or below ground, due to area geography.

Fish Trap: Any man-made structure designed to capture fish.

Fish Weir: Any man-made structure placed in a water body to delay or divert migrating fish.

Flat Water: Water where there is no observable direction of flow.

Milepost: An official state highway marker which denotes a mile location. Milepost markers are typically found at one-mile intervals on Idaho highways.

Mouth of a River or Stream: The place where a river or stream enters a larger body of water.

Private Pond: A man-made, off-channel pond on private property. The owner may only stock the pond with fish after obtaining a Private Pond Permit from IDFG.

Reservoir: The flat water level existing at any time within a reservoir basin. Unless noted otherwise, a stream flowing through the drawn down portion of a reservoir is not considered part of the reservoir.

Section: An area of river, stream, or reservoir between specific boundary locations.

Tributary: A stream flowing into a larger stream or lake.

Upstream: Moving in the direction of a lower elevation point in a stream towards a higher elevation point in the same stream.

Transport, Release, and Possession of Fish

Check Stations: If you have been hunting or fishing or have in possession game or nongame fish, you are required to stop at a check station established to inspect fish, game, or licenses.

Commercial Transport of Fish: If shipping fish by commercial carrier, the outside of the package must show: the number of fish; the species of fish; and the name, address, and fishing license number of the person who caught the fish.

Fish Possessed from State and Federal Fish Hatcheries:

Fish can only be taken from a state or federal fish hatchery when given a written receipt for those fish or as allowed by posted signage.

Head and Tail Removal: It is illegal to have in the field or in transit any trout, char, coho, kokanee, grayling, tiger muskie, or bass from which the head or tail has been removed. For steelhead see page 37. For anadromous salmon see annual published special rules.

Holding Live Fish: No permit is required to keep game fish alive that have legally been reduced to possession, in a live well, net or on a stringer while at the body of water from which they were taken. All fish must be killed or released prior to leaving the water body. However, anadromous salmon and steelhead must either be killed or released after landing.

Movement and Introduction of Live Fish: It is illegal to release or allow the release of any species of live fish (including crayfish and bullfrogs), or fish eggs, in the state of Idaho without a permit from the Director of IDFG. If you illegally introduce fish into a water body without a permit, you could be held financially liable for restoration costs.

Private Fish Pond: You are required to have a private pond permit from IDFG to own a private pond stocked with fish. Contact your local IDFG Office for a permit application.

If you harvest fish from a licensed private pond, you must have a signed receipt for those fish while in transit between the pond and place of consumption/use.

Proxy Statement: You must have a proxy statement to transport fish for another person or accept as a gift any game fish. See page 41 for a proxy statement form. It must be signed by the taker, show the number and kind of fish, the date taken, the taker's address, and fishing license number.

Sale of Fish: Fish harvested by anglers cannot be bought or sold without a commercial license except as provided by Idaho Code.

Transport between Commercially Licensed Fish

Hatcheries: Fish can be transported between licensed commercial fish facilities without additional permits from IDFG.

Waste of Game Fish: It is illegal to waste game fish.

Salvage of Fish

Fish salvage may be authorized when fish populations are threatened by water shortages or other causes. No salvage of fish from public waters will be allowed without IDFG authorization. When salvage is allowed, fish may be taken by snagging, spearing, archery, dip netting, seining, or by hand. Bag limits are typically removed. Use of toxic chemicals explosives, firearms, or electric current is prohibited. A valid fishing license is required. Anglers are reminded that access along canal banks and salvage fishing in most canals and ditches requires prior permission from irrigation companies.

Salmon and Steelhead Rules

Steelhead rules can be found on pages 36-40. Specific seasons and limits are subject to change by the Idaho Fish and Game Commission based on numbers of fish returning to Idaho from the ocean.

Seasons for anadromous (ocean-going) salmon are closed unless opened by special rule, which is published separately from general fishing rules. Look for separate rules pamphlets listing seasons and bag limits for anadromous salmon at vendors, Regional Offices, and on our website. Salmon rules are set annually by the IDFG Commission.

Fishing in Boundary Waters

Bear Lake between Idaho and Utah: The holder of a valid Idaho or Utah fishing license may fish all of Bear Lake **except** in areas **closed** to all fishing by the respective states. Anglers are subject to the rules and regulations of the state in which they are fishing.

Snake River between Idaho and Oregon or Washington: The holder of a valid Idaho fishing license may fish the Snake River where it forms the boundary between the states of Idaho and Oregon or Washington, subject to the fish and game laws of Idaho but may not fish from the shore including wading, and may not fish in sloughs or tributaries on the Oregon or Washington side. An Oregon or Washington license holder has the same rights and restrictions with reference to the Idaho side.

Any angler who fishes on the Snake River or any other water forming an Idaho boundary is entitled to have in possession only the limit allowed by one license regardless of the number of licenses in possession.

Releasing Fish

Releasing fish is a good way to help maintain healthy populations and quality fisheries where angling effort is high. Releasing fish is most effective when anglers strive to ensure that each fish caught and released has the maximum chance to survive after release.

You can do your part to increase fish survival by following these stress reducing practices:

- Use the proper size tackle to land the fish quickly, which can help minimize stress.

- Use barbless hooks to ease hook removal and minimize damage to the fish.
- Use of nets with non-abrasive materials will reduce loss of mucous and scales from the fish.
- Do not handle fish with dry hands.
- Do not squeeze the fish.
- Do not touch or hold fish by the gills, gill covers, or the eyes.
- Leave the fish in the water while removing the hook; holding fish upside down in the water often makes them easier to handle.
- If the hook is too deep to be easily removed, cut the leader. This will give the fish the best chance to survive.
- If the fish is exhausted, hold it in a swimming position in the water and gently move it back and forth until it is able to swim away.

Taking Photographs

Photographs of a trophy catch can provide priceless memories of a great fishing trip, but anglers should use care to take the photo responsibly. Here are things you can do to capture that special image and allow the fish to fight another day (remember – sturgeon can't be removed from the water):

- Have the camera ready and the shot framed before removing the fish from the water.
- When lifting a fish from the water, wet your hands before touching the fish and support the fish with both hands as you gently lift it from the water.
- Strive to hold the fish over the water so if it struggles from your hands it will fall back in the water and not onto a hard surface such as a rock or a boat floor.
- Hold the fish out of the water only as long as it takes to take a picture.

Reasons for Special Seasons

Listed under “Special Rule Waters” for each region you will see a number of waters with season dates different from their regional general stream and lake seasons. While they add complexity to the rules, they are designed to protect fish populations during vulnerable periods. The protection is needed to maintain or restore fish populations and to provide a diversity of fishing opportunities. For example:

- **Seasonal stream closures:** Most often these are spring closures to protect spawning native fishes (e.g. cutthroat trout). Fall closures may be used in some locations to protect spawning bull trout and kokanee. The specific dates of seasonal closures may vary depending on the species and location. In general, these restrictions will apply where spawning fish are easily accessible to anglers, and where protection of spawners is important to conserve species or maintain populations of larger fish.

- **July 1 opener to harvest bass:** Designed to protect large bass during the vulnerable spring period and to reduce the overall annual harvest to provide a “quality” size structure — normally accompanied by other regulations which also restrict the size and number of fish harvested.
- **Closed to Fishing:** A last resort restriction in important spawning and nursery streams for species with critically low populations.

Reasons for Special Size and Bag Limits

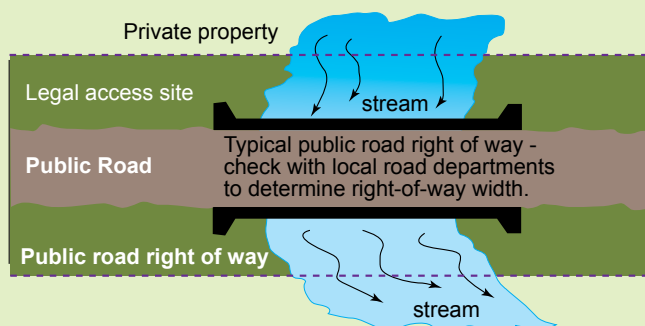
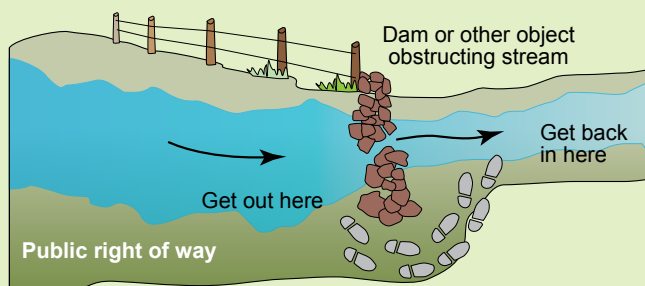
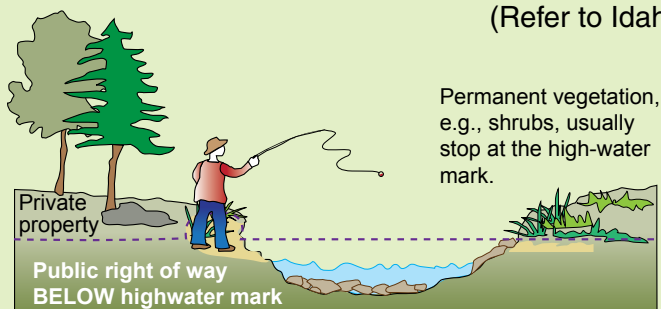
Harvest restrictions help maintain the overall numbers and size of fish in a lake or stream, and also ensure “fair share” so every angler has a chance to catch or harvest fish. Restrictive harvest rules are sometimes used simply to provide a different type of fishing experience or to maximize the size of fish available.

The IDFG manages recreational fisheries to provide a variety of experiences using different combinations of size, gear, and bag limits. The range of harvest rules includes:

- General bag and size limits apply in typical harvest oriented fishing waters without gear or bait restrictions. Many of these waters are stocked with harvestable-sized hatchery trout.
- Wild trout management de-emphasizes angler harvest. For this reason a reduced bag limit of 2 trout is used to maintain wild trout populations. Additional size limits, gear, or bait restrictions may apply.
- Special size limits are used where the goal is to catch more and larger fish by giving up some harvest opportunity. A bag limit of 2 fish (trout or bass) and various size limits such as a 14- or 16-inch minimum or a 12- to 16-inch protected range are common.
- Trophy fish or large trout management may require more restrictive limits. For example, this could include catch-and-release rules or a bag limit of 2 fish (for both trout and bass) combined with length restrictions. Gear or bait restrictions may apply.
- Special cutthroat trout rules are implemented across most of the state to protect our state fish. Cutthroat trout are easily overfished, so various special rules are used to protect them from excess harvest. Many waters throughout the state have catch-and-release, restrictive bag or length limits, or other rules to protect cutthroat trout.

Navigability And Public Access

(Refer to Idaho Code 36-1601)



Navigable streams are defined as any stream which, in its natural high-water condition, will float logs or any other commercial or floatable commodity, or is capable of being navigated by oar or motor propelled small craft for pleasure or commercial purposes. Navigable streams are recognized as public transportation corridors, thus members of the public have the right to use the corridor, provided they enter and exit the corridor at a public right of way, and remain within the corridor. Many navigable streams flow through private property, thus it is important that anglers know their rights and responsibilities when fishing in navigable waters that flow through private property.

When fishing in navigable streams bordered by private property:

- You must stay within the normal high-water marks of the stream, unless you have landowner permission to get out on the bank, or have no other means of getting around an obstruction in the stream (such as a fence or diversion dam).
- When getting outside of the stream to go around an obstruction, take the shortest, most direct route around the obstruction to get back in the stream.
- Do not allow pets or children to trespass on adjacent private property, without landowner permission.
- You may enter and exit navigable streams at other public rights of way, such as county road bridges.
- **ASK FIRST!** Always get landowner permission before crossing private lands outside of a public right of way.

Trespass Law

(Refer to Idaho Code 36-1603)

It is illegal for anyone to post public land that is not held under an exclusive control lease. Conviction of trespass on posted private property carries a mandatory one-year revocation of hunting/fishing/trapping licenses. Federal law prohibits unauthorized trespass on Indian-owned reservation lands for hunting, fishing, or trapping purposes.

No person may enter land to hunt, fish, or trap without permission if the land is either cultivated or posted with legible "No Trespassing" signs every 660 feet. As an alternative to signs, property is legally posted when using a minimum of 100 square inches of fluorescent orange paint, except when metal fence posts are used, the entire post must be painted fluorescent orange. If the geography of the property is such that entry can reasonably be made only at certain points of access, such property is posted sufficiently if signs or markings are clearly visible at access points.



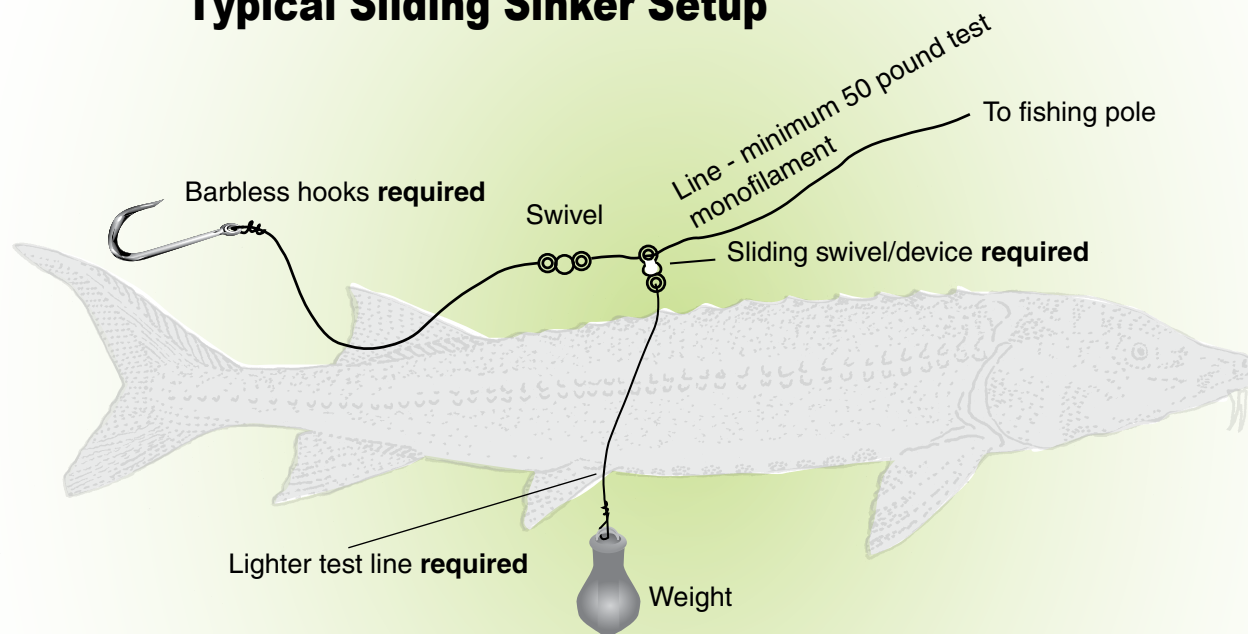
Sturgeon Fishing Tips

The white sturgeon is the largest freshwater fish in North America. To reach their maximum adult size of 8 to 10 feet or more, sturgeon must survive for many years. Accidental deaths result in fewer fish living the 25-50 years of age necessary to reach large sizes. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game believes a number of sturgeon deaths are caused by “ghost gear”—hooks and line broken off or discarded by anglers that are ingested by sturgeon. The following are some rules and fishing tips for sturgeon anglers designed to assist in catching fish and releasing them successfully.

Rigging up (see diagram below)

- When fishing for white sturgeon, by rule (IDAPA 13.01.11) anglers are required to use barbless hooks, a sliding swivel device to secure a weight, and a lighter test line to secure a weight to the sliding swivel or other device.
- We recommend a minimum of 50 pound test monofilament line on your reel. This greatly reduces the chances of breaking off your main line either with a fish on or when snagged.

Typical Sliding Sinker Setup



If You Catch a Sturgeon —

- **Sturgeon must not be removed from the water and must be released upon landing.**
- Sturgeon can be rolled onto their backs in the water before removing the hook. This generally calms the fish down making it easier to remove the hook.
- Do not grasp a sturgeon by the gills. Gills are the lungs of a fish and can be easily damaged.
- Do not mark, scar, or put a tail rope on sturgeon.
- If you break off, retrieve as much line as possible, using a boat if possible. Do not leave discarded line on shore or in the water. It is a real hazard to both fish and wildlife.